



February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Krueger and Chair Pretlow,

Re: Preserving Affordability Through Continued Support of the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) is a community-based nonprofit organization serving low- and moderate-income residents of Northern Manhattan and the Bronx. Through our housing, legal, workforce, and weatherization programs, we work to ensure that families can remain in safe, stable, and affordable homes. Through our 25 programs, we serve 14,000 community members a year.

The Governor and the Mayor of the City of New York have expressed an admirable commitment to expanding affordable housing across the state. While this goal is essential, it is equally important to acknowledge a major challenge: suitable land on which to build new affordable housing is increasingly scarce, both within New York City and throughout the state.

For this reason, preserving existing affordable housing stock is just as critical as creating new units, and this is precisely where the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) plays a vital role. For decades, NMIC has provided WAP services to thousands of tenants residing in the Lower East Side and Upper Manhattan. WAP directly benefits low-income households already residing in homes that require essential upgrades to remain safe, habitable, and affordable. By improving the energy efficiency and long-term stability of these residences, the program helps ensure that families can remain in their homes without facing financial hardship.

Governor Hochul plans to invest more than \$1 billion to address the climate crisis and achieve a more sustainable and affordable future as part of her 2025 State of the State. Weatherization addresses and aides in the climate crisis by installing measures that help reduce harmful pollution and achieve decarbonization goals.

Without WAP, property owners who must undertake major capital improvements (MCIs) would understandably seek to recover their costs through rent increases. However, when WAP supports these improvements, owners receive necessary assistance to complete critical work without passing the financial burden on to tenants. This prevents sudden and significant rent increases that would otherwise threaten housing stability for vulnerable residents served by NMIC.

This issue is especially urgent for the many elderly households we serve who rely on the Weatherization Assistance Program. These New Yorkers often live on fixed incomes and have no ability to absorb a rent increase stemming from an approved MCI. If property owners are permitted or required to raise rents to recoup the costs of upgrades, these seniors would face



the very real possibility of displacement—an outcome that directly undermines the goal of preserving affordability in our communities.

In light of these realities, it is clear that WAP is not only an energy-efficiency initiative but also an essential affordability preservation tool. Protecting and fully funding the Weatherization Assistance Program ensures that low-income households—including older adults and people with limited means—can continue to reside in safe, healthy, and affordable homes in the communities NMIC serves.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to preserve the 10% HEAP allocation to the Weatherization Assistance Program in the final budget.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at marializardo@nmic.org.

Sincerely,

Maria Lizardo, LMSW
Executive Director